

## We're Already Different by Literally\_No\_One\_Cares

**Series:** [Different Is The New Normal \[1\]](#)

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**Summary:**

It starts for Mike when his perspective is changed. It starts for Jane when she learns things. It starts for Will back at the beginning.

## We're Already Different

### Author's Note:

Working title was “Sometimes a Family is a Teenage Dad and His Six Kids and His Two Romantic Partners”

Do with that what you will

It starts for Mike when he walks in on Nancy kissing Steve. It shouldn't be too weird, he's seen it before, but Nancy had been kissing Jonathan just the day before and Mike doesn't know what to think.

“I was just leaving! I think Holly put my headphones in here but it's ok!”

Nancy manages to close the door before Mike can get out, and Steve seems occupied by tapping on the window and—is Jonathan here too now? Mike is super confused.

“Ok, I'm going to talk, and you're going to listen, and then you're going to get out of my room and not say a word to anyone. One: I know you thought I was dating Jonathan and that Steve and I broke up. Two: I *am* dating Jonathan. Steve and I didn't break up. Three: Everyone who is involved knows everything about this situation and no one is going behind anyone's back.”

Nancy pauses, grabbing Mike's headphones by their curly cord and waving them in front of his face. “Four: We've got to keep Holly out of both of our rooms. She steals everything in sight.”

Mike nods. This is all really weird. He takes his headphones and walks out, and he can hear the door lock behind him. He hears the (unfortunately) familiar “mph” sound of lips smacking together, but Nancy is laughing. Nancy can't be kissing someone if she's laughing. Oh my *god* this is just getting more confusing by the second and all Mike can think about is running to the basement where Eleven—*Jane* is in the blanket fort waiting on him.

He almost, almost trips on the second to last step of the basement stairs but he considers that a win, since he didn't fall down the stairs coming from the second floor to the ground floor.

Jane smiles at him, and scoots over a bit for him to sit down next to her.

His spot is colder than it was when he had noticed his headphones were gone; he supposed that Nancy's little speech took more time than he realized.

"Mike?"

Right, Jane. "Sorry, Nancy had to help me find them, Holly hid them really well."

Jane frowns and her nose wrinkles up. "Mike." *Friends don't lie* goes unsaid.

"Trust me, you really don't want to know. Let's just say I saw something I didn't want to see," Mike tells her. His voice is quiet, afraid Nancy will somehow hear him.

Jane looks at him for a moment, but she decides he's telling the truth so they move on. Before long, it's time for her to go home and Hopper's waiting in the driveway. She kisses Mike goodbye and tells him she hopes he can forget what he saw, and leaves him alone with nothing to do but feel weird about his entire existence.

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It starts for Jane when she's flipping through one of many books in front of her without actually reading it when she hears the secret knock. Only two people know it other than her, so she unlocks the door and lets Mike in. Hopper's not home yet, so they're alone for now.

"Studying hard?" Mike asks. He drops down on the floor next to her. The living room is full of books, and notes.

Jane nods. Hopper had talked to the principal of Hawkins High as soon as she'd been officially adopted; they'd come to an agreement that if she could pass a placement test, they'd allow her to start ninth

grade at the same time as her friends. It was hard to swing, but her special circumstances made them more willing to listen.

The placement test would be based mostly around math and reading comprehension. As a result, Jane spends her days learning as many new words as she can, and at night she reads story books.

Jane notices Mike seems off once she closes her vocabulary workbook. "Mike. Why are you sad?"

"I'm not sad," Mike sighs. He's not looking at her, which almost always means he's trying to lie.

"Mike," she says again. "You're not happy, you're not mad, so, you're sad."

Mike stands up and walks to the bookcase. "I'm not sad because I don't think sad is the right word for it. I think I'm confused. No, that's not right either."

Jane picks up her well-used dictionary and finds the C's. "C-o-n?"

"Yeah, c-o-n-f-u-s-e," he spells out.

Jane goes over the entry a few times and tries to understand. Mike says he's confused but he's not confused.

"I guess what I mean is I know how I feel but I don't have all the right words to put it in and I don't know what to do with it," he explains.

Jane definitely understands that. No matter how many new words she learns, it always feels like it's not enough. Luckily, she's got people around her who are patient and willing to help her learn. "Tell me with the words you have."

Mike runs his finger over a book's spine. "Ok. So. Max and Lucas are dating. Hopper and the librarian lady dated. Nancy and Jonathan are dating. Do you see a pattern here?"

When Jane doesn't say anything, he keeps going. "The pattern in that boys date girls and girls date boys, and people only date one person

at a time.”

“I understand,” Jane says. She gets up so she can come stand next to him.

“But there are boys who want to date boys and girls who want to date girls. There’s nothing wrong with that, I mean, they’re not hurting anyone, but sometimes people are just bad, and they don’t like people who are different.”

Jane understands that too. Bad people are everywhere. “Mouthbreathers.”

“Yeah, they’re total mouthbreathers. They call people like that names, bad names, and they try to hurt them. Sometimes they...they make them gone.”

Jane breaths in, hard. People are killed over who they want to kiss? There’s so much bad in the world that she doesn’t know about yet, and the more she learns the more she thinks that the Upside Down isn’t the bad world, that both worlds are horrible in their own ways.

“But most of the time, even people who are different only want to date one person,” Mike whispers.

“Do you want to date more than one person?” They’ve never said it out loud before, but Jane and Mike are dating. She’s pretty sure they are, anyway. The only things she knows about dating is that you hold hands and kiss and go to the Snow Ball together, and they’ve done all of those things.

“Yes? No? That’s the part I don’t understand,” Mike groans. “I walked in on my sister kissing Steve Harrington.”

Steve is a bit of a myth to Jane, and vice versa. By the time he’d become a part of the whole Demogorgon thing, she and the boys were alone at the school, and then she took the monster back into the Upside Down. Then, once she’d reunited with Mike and the rest of the party, he wasn’t at the Snow Ball and she still hasn’t met him. She imagines that he’s as confused (now that she knows the word) about her as she is about him.

"Nancy is dating Jonathan," Jane says plainly.

"I thought so too, but apparently she's dating Steve and Jonathan. And I think...Steve and Jonathan are dating each other. I don't know. But. It got me thinking, I guess."

"Steve and Jonathan like boys? And Nancy?"

"Are you sure you can't read minds?" Mike laughs. "Yeah. They like both. I think maybe I like both? I don't know, I've only ever liked two people before."

"And you want to date a boy, and...me?" Jane asks carefully.

"It doesn't bother you?"

"No. Should it? We're already different, and it's just one more thing that's different," she says.

Mike smiles. "Cool. You're so cool, like, all the time."

"Who's the boy?"

"Oh," Mike murmurs, "Yeah, that's probably important. And I don't even know if he likes guys, and if he does, if he likes me, or if he'd be ok with this whole thing."

Jane pokes his arm. "That's not an answer, Mike."

"Come on, El, like you don't know. Think about it. Who do I spend as much time with as I do you? Who's just as weird as us? Who do people call bad names because they think he might not like girls? Who did I almost lose, the same way I thought I lost you?"

"You want to date Will?" It's surprising to Jane for a minute, but it's also not surprising at all. In so many ways, she sees Will and herself as the same. Will is so much to her; he's (at least part of) the reason Mike kept her, he's someone who understands what she's seen, and he listens to music that makes her think of her sister. He's...he's...a friend, a member of the party. A part of her family.

And he's so much more to Mike.

"You should talk to him," she says.

"I just told you I don't know what he'll even thi—"

"You should talk to him," she repeats, more firmly. "Tell Will how you feel. He deserves to know, even if he doesn't feel the same."

"Deserve. That's a new one. Was that a dictionary word or a vocabulary book word?"

*"Mike."*

Mike sighs. "Ok, ok, I promise I'll talk to Will. I'm supposed to go to his house tomorrow to play his Atari. I can talk to him then. Promise."

Promise is a dangerous word. Mike really means it if he promises, because he knows how Jane feels about promises.

"Ok, we're done with that now. Do you want to go over your flash cards? I don't have any homework, or at least none that's due tomorrow."

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It starts for Will first.

Will Byers has never loved anyone the way he loves Mike Wheeler, and he's loved him as long as he can remember. It hurt him the first time he saw the way Mike looks at Jane, the first time they kissed in front of him, the first time Mike ever talked about her. It doesn't hurt because he doesn't want Mike to like Jane, it hurts because it means Mike doesn't feel the same way Will does.

For Will, life is a lot of hurt, figuring out how to deal with it, being happy for a while, and then everything being turned on its head all over again. Wash, rinse, repeat. Ugh. He's getting all in his head again. He needs someone to talk to.

Will knocks on Jonathan's bedroom door, but he doesn't answer.

He turns the doorknob. It's not locked, but it's just way too quiet to be normal, and Will doesn't feel good about that. "Jonathan?"

Steve Harrington is in Jonathan's bedroom. On his bed. They've obviously jumped apart. They had to have been...doing things. Things Will is thankful he didn't see.

"This really needs to stop happening," Steve says through the hand covering his face.

"It's just Will," Jonathan says back. That makes Will feel a little better. Jonathan doesn't mind that Will nearly saw him making out with Steve. "Is everything ok, bud?"

"Not really," Will tells him. "I was kind of thinking too hard and it made me feel all messed up and I wanted to talk it out."

Will can see Steve visually shift into mother hen mode. He straightens up, moves farther away from Jonathan, and then pats the space between them. Will sits and just breaths for a minute.

"I like Mike," he breaths out in rush of syllables almost too fast to make out, but he can tell they hear him.

"Man, what is it with you guys and the Wheeler siblings?" Steve jokes. "I mean, I'm right there with you, Nancy's awesome, but Will too?"

"Steve," Jonathan warns. "So, you like Mike. Mike's a cool guy. Why do feel all messed up?"

"Mike likes Jane," Will reminds him.

"Ah yes, the girl, the myth, the legend. Jane 'Eleven' Hopper."

"Steve, you're not helping," Jonathan laughs. "So. You like Mike but Mike likes Jane. And I liked Nancy but Nancy liked Steve. You can see how that worked out. Have you thought about talking to Mike?"

"Mike likes girls," Will insists.

Steve ruffles his hair. "So do I, kid. Doesn't mean he can't like you."

"He's already dating Jane. Isn't it a little late to just walk up to him and go 'hey so I'm gay and also you're attractive'?"



Jonathan and Steve share a bemused look for a few seconds. “Uh, I don’t know that we’re the best people to ask about that considering that’s literally what happened to us,” Jonathan admits.

“It’s never too late to tell someone how you feel about them. Even if it doesn’t work out, it can’t hurt to try. If Mike doesn’t like you like that, then nothing changes. If he does, then it would a good thing for you to tell him. Either way, you get it off your chest and you don’t have to wonder anymore,” Steve says.

Will goes to bed that night trying muster up the courage to talk to Mike. This might be one thing, one single thing in his life that goes right.

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As soon as Jonathan pulls into the driveway, Steve’s car pulls in behind it. Will and Mike both gag at the sight of him, at thought of him and Jonathan being gross in front of them. They practically fling themselves out of the car, then run through the door and to living room.

Jonathan and Steve are slower. They’re not in much of a hurry to be inside because they don’t feel like they have a time limit. It’s a benefit of A) having a much later curfew than Will and Mike and B) not giving a shit about curfews.

Jonathan gives Will a knowing look as the make their way to his bedroom.

“Stop being weird and go make out with your stupid boyfriend,” Will grumbles.

Jonathan laughs at him, which sounds quieter the farther away he gets.

“You know about that?” Mike asks.

“Is it supposed to be a secret?” Will counters flatly.

Mike shrugs. “I guess not. I found out on accident.”

“Me too. I’ve got 3D Tic Tac Toe and Adventure. If we play 3D Tic

Tac Toe we can play against each other, but if you'd rather play Adventure you can."

Mike grabs the second controller and smiles at Will. "Tic Tac Toe it is!"

They play for a while without talking much. Will doesn't mind; he enjoys being able to be quiet with someone. Too many people want to talk and talk and talk, and sometimes talking too much is more than Will can handle, even more now, after everything that's happened.

Will's comfortable silence doesn't last very long.

"I had a really long conversation with El yesterday," Mike begins.

El. It seems funny to Will that Mike calls her El even though they know her real name now. She doesn't like being called Eleven, because the bad men called her Eleven. It's different when Mike calls her El. It's the name Mike gave her, so even though it came from the name Eleven, it's ok.

"Don't you talk to her everyday?" Will asks. Hopper had surprised her with a SuperCom, and even though she's the one who lives the farthest away, she can manipulate the signal so that she can reach any of the party.

"You know that's not what I mean," Mike says.

Will gets a good look at Mike. "Are you ok?"

And Mike starts laughing. "You really are the same." When Will just looks at him, he explains. "El says that you and her are the same. Like, you're cut from the same mold or whatever because you're so different from everyone else. And she's so right."

"She can tell when you're not ok, you mean," Will says softly.

Mike sits his joystick down on the floor in front of them. "I guess since you're the same I should say this the same way I did to her. I walked in on my sister kissing Steve. And then your brother came in through the window. And it just, it made me think about some

things.”

Will’s not going to get his hopes up. “Yeah?”

“So most people are either straight or they’re not,” Mike says, lays it out in front of Will as plain as day. “But sometimes people are like Steve and Jonathan. And me.”

“Ok,” is all Will knows to say.

“Ok?”

“Ok,” Will repeats. “It doesn’t change anything.”

“But it’s more than just liking guys and girls,” Mike goes on. “I like a specific guy. I’m not really sure what he’d think of that, of me, if he knew.”

“I know how you feel,” Will says before he knows what he’s doing. Well, better just go with it, then. “I’m gay.”

Mike doesn’t say anything for what feels like forever. “I had no idea.”

“Like you really didn’t know,” Will snorts. “Everything about me is different. I look different, I act different, I like things that are different, I went to different dimension, Jesus. Are you really going to say you didn’t know that I’d be different in *that* way too?”

“It’s usually safer to assume people aren’t gay when it comes to also being gay, or whatever the hell I am.”

“That’s a good point,” Will agrees. Because he always agrees with Mike. “But wait—you said you like someone. Aren’t you and Jane...?”

“When I said I’m like Jonathan, I mean I’m really like Jonathan. I like more than one person at the same time.”

That makes more sense. “So you talked to Jane about this and what? What did she think?”

“She pretty much told me to go for it. I’m still scared though. What if

he says no? What if he says yes? What if his older brother gets his boyfriend to kill me with his baseball bat with the nails in it?"

It takes longer than it probably should for that to sink in for Will.

Jonathan's boyfriend is the one who has the nail-bat. Which means Mike is talking about Will. Which means Will is either hallucinating, dead, or for once in his life something is going the way he wants it to. Either way, his face breaks into a wide, slightly painful grin.

"Ok," Will says again. This is definitely ok.

Mike puts his hand on top of Will's. "Ok?"

"Ok."

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Mike gets his bike from its spot outside of the school. He's planning on going to see Jane, to tell her about Will. Dustin, Lucas, Max, and eventually Will all come to grab their bikes (well, Max doesn't have a bike but she came with Lucas) as well.

Spur of the moment, Mike has an idea.

"Hey Will, I was going to go to El's house today, did you want to come?"

Before Will can answer, Lucas is talking. "Isn't that weird? Why would you want someone to go with you to go your girlfriend's house?"

"What, I can't want to hang out with my two favorite people at the same time?" Mike rebuttals.

"Man, if Will goes with Mike I don't have anyone to hang out with," Dustin whines.

"You could come to the arcade with us," Max suggests.

"I wouldn't want to third-wheel," he declines.

"What, I can't want to hang out with my two favorite people at the

same time?" Lucas teases.

"Really Dustin, it's fine if you come with us."

"I didn't even say I was going with Mike," Will breaks in. "I might not want to."

"Come on, it's Mike. You always do what Mike wants to do," Dustin points out. "I'll go with you guys as long as you don't kiss in front of me."

Mike turns to Will. "So, do you want to come?"

Will nods.

They leave the party behind to discuss which forms of PDA are the most sickening on their own (Dustin insists kissing is the worst, Max thinks that hand holding is mushiest, and Lucas thinks pet names are too much).

At the Hopper residence, Mike knocks on the door the same way he always does, and he hears the locks move one by one.

When the door opens, Jane is in her room. She calls out to Mike, then she walks into the living room.

"Will," Jane says. She looks down, at where Mike has just grabbed Will's hand. "Will!"

She bounds forward, encircling both boys in a tight hug. She kisses Will on the cheek, and Mike on the lips. The unlocked door opens behind them.

"Mike, Will," Jim greets them. "Any particular reason there's a group hug happening in the doorway?"

Jane lets go of her boys. "I missed Will. It's been a long time since I've seen him. Fifteen days."

It's not a lie, but Hopper looks suspicious.

"Mike wanted to surprise her. Actually, Chief, can I use your phone?"

My mom doesn't know where I am," Will plays along.

"Ok, you go call Joyce and let her know," Jim says.

Jane takes Mike to her room while Will's on the phone. "You told Will," she says. They keep their voices low. Mike figures Hopper doesn't need to know anything right now.

"Yeah. I wanted to tell you in person that it went really well," he says.

Jane sits down on her bed, near the head, and Mike sits down next to her. "Do you feel better now?"

"More than better," Mike gushes. "There's nothing that could make me happier."

The door opens. It's Will, not Jim, and he takes the available space next to Mike at the foot of the bed.

Mike immediately grasps Will's hand, and Jane slips her hand into Mike's other one.

"That was so cheesy, by the way. What you said at school. 'My two favorite people,'" Will says. "He told Lucas he wanted to hang out with his two favorite people at the same time."

Jane giggles. "Mike."

"I've been betrayed," Mike gasps. "Betrayed by a member of my own party!"

"I didn't say it was bad, it's just cheesy," Will says in his own defense.

"Will Byers is a traitor!"

"But I'm still your favorite," Will insists.

Jane nods too seriously for the situation. "Me too."

The door opens again. Jim lingers in the doorway instead of coming

into the room, and if he notices Will and Mike's intertwined hands, he doesn't say anything.

"Just thought I'd ask if you're staying for dinner so I'd know if I'm making a two people sized-meatloaf or a four people sized-meatloaf," he tells the kids.

Jane looks at Mike. "Stay?" It's two questions at once; stay here, and stay like this.

"Yeah. We're going to stay."

### **Author's Note:**

#### **BONUS**

"Wait so you think Mike and Will are together?" Max almost looked up from the Dig Dug machine. "He's dating Jane."

"Yeah, but that two favorite people comment? That was weird. And I totally saw them kiss," Lucas argues.

"Ugh, I don't want to see anyone kiss," Dustin groans.

Max can't argue with them actually kissing in front of Lucas. "Mike wouldn't cheat on Jane, would he?"

"No. I think he's dating both of them and they both know. Why else would he take Will to her house?"

"How long before they say something about it?" Dustin wonders.

"Give them all the time they need. Yes! New high score!"